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SURVEY OF FRENCH III AND SPANISH III STUDENTS NOT PLANNING TO STUDY FRENCH IV OR SPANISH IV.

BY- GLATTHORN, ALLAN A. EDWARDS, FAULINE L.

ABINGTON HIGH SCHOOL, PA., NORTH CAMPUS

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A SURVEY CONDUCTED AT ABINGTON HIGH SCHOOL IN PENNSYLVANIA REVEALED THAT OVER HALF THE SCHOOL'S 10TH AND 11TH GRADE STUDENTS DISCONTINUE THEIR LANGUAGE STUDY AFTER THEY FINISH 3RD YEAR FRENCH OR SPANISH. THE MOST COMMON REASONS GIVEN BY THESE STUDENTS WERE SCHEDULING DIFFICULTIES, LOW GRADES IN THE LANGUAGE COURSE, AND THE FEELING THAT FURTHER LANGUAGE STUDY WAS NOT REQUIRED FOR COLLEGE PREPARATION. RECOMMENDATIONS RESULTING FROM THE STUDY INCLUDE COLLECTING FURTHER DATA FROM OTHER SECONDARY SCHOOLS, SEEKING ADVICE FROM COLLEGE LANGUAGE DEPARTMENTS, AND IMPLEMENTING INDEPENDENT LANGUAGE STUDY COURSES AND SKILL MAINTENANCE COURSES. CHARTS ON THE NUMBERS AND PERCENTAGE OF FRENCH III AND SPANISH III STUDENTS DROPPING LANGUAGE STUDY AND THE REASONS FOR DISCONTINUATION ARE INCLUDED. (SS)

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SURVEY OF FRENCH III AND SPANISH III
STUDENTS NOT PLANNING TO STUDY
FRENCH IV OR SPANISH IV

Dr. Allan A. Glatthorn,
Principal, Abington High School

Mrs. Pauline L. Edwards,
Coordinator of Research

ABINGTON HIGH SCHOOL NORTH CAMPUS
Abington, Pennsylvania
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THE PROBLEM

Introduction:

Because the numbers of students dropping a language after the third year seemed to be increasing, Mr. Frank Wilgocki, at that time chairman of the language department at North Campus, made a preliminary study of students taking French III and Spanish III at both North and South Campus.

This preliminary survey at the end of the third marking period was followed by a brief student questionnaire administered to students after course selection cards had been completed. At this time, all students who had not elected a fourth year of a language were given the questionnaire.

METHODOLOGY - DATA COLLECTION

The Language Survey was administered on March 31 to 97 tenth grade French III and Spanish III students at North Campus and to 123 eleventh grade French III and Spanish III students at South Campus who do not plan to continue with the language study.

Each teacher presently teaching a third year French or Spanish class was given survey forms for his class or classes. Only students not planning to continue a language for a fourth year were asked to fill out the forms, indicating reasons for dropping the courses.

Miss Helen Black of South Campus and Miss Margaret Tonty of North Campus distributed and collected the survey forms from the teachers and sent them to the Research Center at North Campus for compilation and analysis of data.

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

TABLE I

NUMBERS AND PERCENTAGE OF FRENCH III AND/OR SPANISH III
STUDENTS WHO ARE DISCONTINUING THEIR PRESENT
LANGUAGE STUDY

North Campus (10th Grade)	Total Number of Students on Class Roll	Number of Students Dropping Language	Percent Dropping Language
French III	134	56	41.8
Spanish III	75	41	54.6
Total	209	97	46.4
South Campus (11th Grade)	Total Number of Students on Class Roll	Number of Students Dropping Language	Percent Dropping Language
French III	164	88	53.6
Spanish III	115	86	74.8
Total	249	174	62.4

Analysis of TABLE I

According to the March 7 survey of tenth grade language students, 90 out of 209 French III and Spanish III students were planning to discontinue their language. During the interval between the two surveys, 7 more students elected to discontinue, bringing the total to 97, or a discontinuance of 46.4%.

According to South Campus figures, 174 of the 249 eleventh grade students now studying French III and Spanish III are not planning to continue. This constitutes 62.4%. Of these 174, questionnaires were completed by 123.

TABLE II

COMPARISON OF REASONS GIVEN BY FRENCH III AND SPANISH III STUDENTS
IN ELEVENTH GRADE FOR DISCONTINUING THEIR LANGUAGE

Reasons	Fr. III (N=58)		Sp. III (N=65)		Total (N=123)	
	Number Giving Reason	Percent Giving Reason	Number Giving Reason	Percent Giving Reason	Number Giving Reason	Percent Giving Reason
1. I plan to begin a different language.	4	6.9	2	3.1	6	4.9
2. Scheduling difficulties. (Could not fit it in with schedule already heavy with majors.)	24	41.4	18	27.7	42	34.1
3. Poor grades.	21	36.2	30	46.1	51	41.5
4. I believe I do not need any more foreign language to meet my post-high school goals.	27	46.6	30	46.1	57	46.3
5. Other: (listed by students)	19	32.8	13	20.0	32	26.0
(1) Lack of interest.	2		3		5	
(2) Dislike of subject.	3		3		6	
(3) Course too difficult for ability.	6		-		6	
(4) Background not good enough.	1		2		3	
(5) Dislike of teaching method.	2		-		2	
(6) Changing to business course.	1		1		2	
(7) Dislike of teacher.	-		1		1	
(8) Course not beneficial.	1		-		1	
(9) Creates burden on other subjects.	-		1		1	
(10) Will not be in Abington next yr.	1		-		1	
(11) Taking III again.	-		1		1	
(12) Too many problems ahead in 12th.	-		1		1	
(13) Want more time for extra-curricular activities.	1		-		1	
(14) Haven't learned much this year.	1		-		1	
(15) Want to make next year easier.	1		-		1	

Analysis of TABLE II

TABLE II, the eleventh grade survey, does not give complete results since, for some reason, 51 of the 174 students not taking a fourth year of French or Spanish did not report their reactions.

However, of the 123 student surveys returned, 41.4% of the students desiring to study French IV indicated that they could not do so because of scheduling difficulties, and 27.7% of the Spanish III students gave the same reason.

46% of both French III and Spanish III students felt further foreign language study was unnecessary for the development of their post high school plans.

36.2% of the French III students and 46.1% of the Spanish III students were motivated by their grades to drop the study of foreign language.

32.8% of the French III students gave other reasons, while only 20% of the Spanish III students listed other reasons. Six students found French too difficult for their ability, but no Spanish student listed that as a reason.

TABLE III

REASONS GIVEN BY ALL STUDENTS INVOLVED
FOR DISCONTINUING THEIR LANGUAGE

Reasons	10th Gr. (N=97)		11th Gr. (N=123)		Total (N=220)	
	Number Giving Reason	Percent Giving Reason	Number Giving Reason	Percent Giving Reason	Number Giving Reason	Percent Giving Reason
1. I plan to begin a different language.	24	24.7	6	4.9	30	13.6
2. Scheduling difficulties. (Could not fit it in with schedule already heavy with majors.)	30	30.9	42	34.1	72	32.7
3. Poor grades.	53	54.6	51	41.5	104	47.3
4. I believe I do not need any more foreign language to meet my post-high school goals.	29	29.9	57	46.3	86	39.1
5. Other: (listed by students)	28	28.9	32	26.0	60	27.3
(1) Lack of interest	6		5		11	
(2) Dislike of subject.	4		6		10	
(3) Course too difficult for ability.	4		6		10	
(4) Background not good enough.	7		3		10	
(5) Dislike of teaching method.	4		2		6	
(6) Dislike of teacher.	3		1		4	
(7) No time for homework.	3		-		3	
(8) Course not beneficial.	2		1		3	
(9) Creates burden on other subjects.	1		1		2	
(10) Changing to business course.	-		2		2	
(11) Will not be in Abington next yr.	1		1		2	
(12) Taking III again.	-		1		1	
(13) Too many problems ahead in 12th.	-		1		1	
(14) Want more time for extra-curricular activities.	-		1		1	
(15) Haven't learned much this year.	-		1		1	
(16) Want to make next year easier.	-		1		1	
(17) Advised not to go on.	1		-		1	

Analysis of TABLE III

TABLE III compares the reasons given by tenth and eleventh grade students for discontinuing their language study.

More of the responding eleventh grade (46.3%) than tenth grade (29.9%) students felt that additional foreign language study was unnecessary for the development of their post high school plans.

54.6% of the tenth grade students chose to eliminate the fourth year of a language because of their grades, while 41.5% of the responding eleventh grade students indicated that their grades influenced their decision.

Scheduling difficulties were cited as the reason for discontinuing by 30.9% of the tenth grade students and by 34.1% of the eleventh grade students who responded.

More tenth grade (28.9%) than eleventh grade (26%) students listed other reasons. "Background not good enough" (7) and "Lack of interest" (6) were other reasons listed most by tenth grade students. "Dislike of subject" (6), "Course too difficult for ability" (6), and "Lack of interest" (5) were other reasons listed most by the responding eleventh grade students.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

1. More than half the students who finish French III and Spanish III at the end of grade 10 or 11 plan to discontinue the study of that language. More juniors than sophomores plan to discontinue study.
2. Poor grades and a feeling that no additional study would be required for college preparation were the two main reasons cited; "scheduling difficulties" was cited by about one-third of the students.

Conclusions

The fact that the school district offers language study from grades 7 to 12 with the expectation that students having begun the study will continue until graduation and the fact that one-half of those students discontinue such study prior to graduation indicates a serious discrepancy between school and student view of language study sequence.

Recommendations

1. The foreign language department should attempt to gather data from other schools to determine whether a similar problem exists in other language programs.
2. The foreign language department should survey a selected sample of college foreign language departments for their suggestions

concerning ways the school might deal with the problem of the discontinuance of language study prior to graduation.

3. The guidance department should strongly encourage all students dropping French or Spanish III to take the CEEB Achievement Tests in those languages.
4. The high school administration together with the foreign language department should study next year such approaches as the following:
 - a. Independent study programs for students who have dropped the language.
 - b. "Foreign Language Skill Maintenance Course." Such a course might meet only two or three times a week, possibly without grades or credit, in order to serve the needs of those students who cannot or do not want to schedule a full language course, yet who still wish to maintain competency in that language.
5. The school district curriculum office should undertake systematic study of the following question: if a student of somewhat marginal abilities wishes to study foreign language for only three years, when is the best time for him to start such study?
6. Since low grades was cited as a reason by 47% of the students, and since a grade of C is required for further study (requiring summer school attendance for those with D's), the school district curriculum office should undertake systematic study of whether the following answer might be feasible: students earning a D in Foreign language III would be able to continue in language IV without summer school and would be placed in a special group for modified instruction.

APPENDIX

SURVEY PROGRESS FROM SPANISH III/FRENCH III into SPANISH IV/FRENCH IV

There are listed below several reasons that may cause a student to discontinue a sequence in foreign language. Please check any that describe why you plan to terminate Spanish/French at the conclusion of this school year. If you have reasons other than or in addition to those listed, please indicate these in the spaces provided.

GRADE 10th _____ 11th _____ (check one)

_____ 1. I plan to begin a different language.

_____ 2. Schedule difficulties.

Explain: _____

_____ 3. Poor grades.

_____ 4. I believe I do not need any more foreign language to meet my post-high school goals.

_____ 5. Other:

Explain: _____

Thank you.